

# Young Spartacus

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## THE 1930'S AND TODAY—

# Fight Special Oppression of Young Workers!

A basic tenet of New Left politics was that the working class in the advanced capitalist countries had become hopelessly reactionary, in fact had benefited from the imperialist policies of their respective bourgeoisies and had to be replaced by the youth (primarily students) as the revolutionary vanguard. The bankrupt utopianism of this classless conception, discredited by the events in France, 1968, and the increase in militancy in the American working class provoked by the social crisis of the late sixties and early seventies, has led to its demise in popularity among the opportunists of the American left today, and the rise of the symmetrical error, workerism.

Youth is not a class, but is integrated into all classes of society, while suffering from the effects of special oppression on almost all levels. Until the age of 21, the young are reduced to the status of second-class citizens by a curtailment of general political, social and legal rights which serve to stifle their social and political development by throwing them into a position of dependency on the reactionary nuclear family. The young are deprived, therefore, of basic bourgeois democratic rights. Although the voting age has now been lowered to 18, property rights, marriage rights, access to birth control, the right to live away from



DETROIT NEWS



Young workers are often more militant than older workers (the average age of Lordstown GM workers was 24 at time of March 1972 strike). Task of communists is to fight for class unity, not divisive concepts of youth vanguardism.

home and to be one's own legal guardian, is still denied in many states to those between 16 and 20. Youth is also subject to being used as cannon fodder in imperialist wars. These particular aspects of special oppression apply generally to youth of all classes, while being most oppressive of working-class

and ghetto youth who do not have the money or means of finding ways to circumvent these problems. Revolutionaries must demand the extension of full adult rights to all aged 16 or over, with a government stipend to enable them to live away from home. The special oppression of young

workers takes myriad forms in the U.S. today. The inexperienced young tend to be driven into the marginal sections of industry, often unorganized and always low-paying. Youth, as well as blacks and women, help fill the ranks of the reserve army of the unemployed, which the capitalists use to drive down wages, offset the demand for labor and set employed against unemployed. Child labor still exists to a large degree on the farms where the conditions are terrible, the hours long and the wages below the federal minimum (which specifically exempts farm labor). The poor high schools most working-class youth attend do not prepare them for college, which they cannot afford anyway. Apprentices' wages start at 50 percent of the full union rate, and apprentices often cannot join the union until their training ends. Those youth who are hired by major industry face unnecessarily long probationary periods before being admitted to the union, and once admitted they often do not receive full union benefits such as paid vacations and supplementary lay-off pay for the first year of employment. Some unions, such as the National Maritime Union (NMU) and the International Longshore Workers Union (ILWU), have a second-class membership status which discriminates against the newer, younger workers. And unemployment, which is three times greater for youth aged 16 to 24, isolates the youth from the working-class movement, makes them dependent on their families for support, and drives them into the lumpenproletariat or into the bourgeois army.

## Introducing Young Spartacus

*Young Spartacus*, superseding the *RCY Newsletter*, is the organ of the Revolutionary Communist Youth, youth section of the Spartacist League. We have changed the name of our press in accordance with its stabilization as a regular bi-monthly paper and the change in the press itself towards a more interventionist, activist content, reflecting the RCY's growth and increasing influence as a vital Leninist youth group.

In taking the name *Young Spartacus* for its press, the RCY links itself to the revolutionary traditions of the Communist League of America (the early Trotskyist opposition) whose youth group, the Spartacus Youth League, gave the following explanation for its adoption of the masthead *Young Spartacus*:

"...we have adopted the name *Young Spartacus* in honor of Spartacus, the great leader of the revolt of the oppressed slaves and gladiators in Rome;

further, we take this name in an effort to follow in the traditions of the Spartacus League in Germany, organized by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in their revolt against the German Social Democracy that trampled revolutionary theory and practice into the dust.

"In the glorious name of Spartacus, Liebknecht, Luxemburg and Lenin we pick up the banner of communism now being besmirched by the Stalinist Comintern..."

—*Young Spartacus*, December 1931

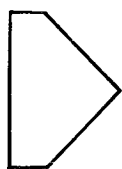
Every new generation of revolutionaries must relearn and reapply the historical lessons and traditions of the Marxist movement's past in order to solidify and educate a cadre capable of fulfilling today's tasks. The goal of this newspaper will be the application of the accumulated theoretical capital of the socialist movement to the class struggle—theory as a guide to action. In doing this, *Young Spartacus* will counterpose the program of revolution-

ary Marxism and Leninism to the various fakers on the left, defending the Marxist program from opportunist criticism and pointing to the theoretical and practical misleadership and betrayals of the reformist and centrist currents. We will present our political perspectives in disciplined solidarity with the Spartacist League in its struggle for the class independence of the proletariat and the building of the vanguard party—the necessary preparations for the socialist revolution.

*Young Spartacus* will report on the RCY's activities around the country among young workers, as an auxiliary to the communist opposition in the labor movement, in defense of the left against bourgeois repression and towards the education of the next generation of revolutionary cadre.

Today we continue the fight for revolutionary communist principles, proud of our past and confident of the future international victory of the working class.

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### Young Worker in the Depression

The 1930's were the years of the rise of the Fourth International and the

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# EDITORIAL NOTES

## The Reactionary New Drug Laws in N.Y. State

NEW YORK—On 1 September new laws went into effect in New York State which billionaire butcher of Attica Governor Rockefeller has called the "toughest anti-drug program in the nation." To give one example of how repressive these laws are: A housewife who gave a friend a diet pill which contained a trace of amphetamines could go to jail for seven years (assuming she was a "first offender"). Under these laws, to get caught in possession of more than two ounces of narcotics results in a minimum sentence of 15 years and a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. The only "parole" available to anyone caught with any amount of narcotics is "life parole," i.e., lifetime supervision of one's personal activities by the state. Anyone caught with more than one ounce of marijuana is subject to one to 15 years imprisonment; for less than one ounce, one to seven years.

These laws are so reactionary that, not only have the customary tears been shed by the liberal establishment, but the Governor's drug laws are even opposed by such right-wing groups as the New York State Conservative Party and the District Attorney's Association. Both the liberal and right-wing opponents of the drug laws are motivated not by compassion for the drug addict, but by the fact that enforcement of the laws will overload the courts and eliminate the flexibility in plea-bargaining that is necessary to get addicts and small-time pushers to "rat" on the big-time operators. Obviously, Rockefeller is not interested in catching the big-time operators. As Tom Wicker stated in the 1 April 1973 *New York Times*, state law enforcement officials "are all too often hand-in-glove with the drug traffickers."

Just before Rockefeller announced his "mandatory life" drug laws at the beginning of this year for every one from pushers to generous dieters, the New York City Police Commissioner announced that over 200 pounds of cocaine and heroin had been stolen from the Police Department by policemen. Policemen would not steal this quantity of hard drugs unless they had an already established working relationship with the big-time operators in the drug-traffic underworld.

The new laws have, in fact, nothing to do with control of the drug traffic. What they are intended to become is one more weapon in the hands of the cops to intimidate black and Spanish-speaking communities, and to harass young workers, leftists and students.

The drug laws are instruments for expanding the repressive apparatus of the bourgeois state. What if the additional cops hired today steal a few hundred pounds of hard drugs from the police department and resell it to the Mafia, if tomorrow these same cops are available to bring down a reign of terror against a rebellious black community or are available to "plant" narcotics in the house of some radical or militant unionist so that they can conveniently be removed from the struggle.

We are in principle opposed to any law against what is called "crimes without victims," e.g., laws against drug addiction, vagrancy, prostitution, obscenity and so on. We deny that the bourgeois state has any business intervening in people's personal affairs and private lives. Such laws only reinforce the repressive apparatus of the bourgeois state as well as reactionary social attitudes. We will carry through the struggle to abolish all such laws and the capitalist system whose class exploitation provides the social and psychological oppression that drives people to drug addiction.

## SL/RCY Summer Camp

Over 250 supporters and friends attended a Spartacist League/Revolutionary Communist Youth educational-recreational summer camp in mid-August. The camp included classes on the history of the Fourth International, the black question in the United States, post-war political economy and Trotskyist work in the trade unions. Highlighting the camp were an international symposium including speakers from the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand and the Austrian Bolshevik-Leninists, as well as a debate with the left-Shachtmanite Revolutionary Socialist League, which recently was expelled from the International Socialists (see *Workers Vanguard* No. 27, 31 August, for more details on the classes and other camp events). The SL Central Committee held a plenary session which concentrated on discussion of international perspectives and trade-union work.

The RCY National Committee Plenum held at the camp voted to change the name of the *RCY Newsletter* to *Young Spartacus* (see front-page article, this issue) and discussed a series of organizational questions facing the RCY as a growing youth movement. The RCY has been successful as a training ground for professional revolutionaries: Numbers of young comrades, having spent a year or two in important areas of youth work have been asked to take on party assignments in line with SL's expansion in the process of transformation into a vanguard party nucleus. At the same time, the RCY has been experiencing continual growth both through organizational regroupment and individual recruitment of young workers, students and former supporters of ostensibly revolutionary organizations, and many new comrades have demonstrated the commitment to take up responsible work in the RCY.

Extensive discussion took place over the strengthening of existing branches and the immediate and longer-range projections for building new branches. Morale was high as the comrades discussed the role of the youth in aiding the transformation of the SL into the revolutionary party nucleus in this country.

## Defend the Attica Inmates!

BUFFALO—Pre-trial hearings have recently been concluded in Buffalo for those Attica inmates charged with participation in the 1971 prison rebellion. Out of a total of 60 defendants, approximately one half are now out on bail; all await trial in September. The Attica Defense Committee (ADC), whose work consists almost solely of a drive for liberal "community" support, is planning a series of educational and demonstrations for the month of September.

The ADC claims to have no politics (allegedly because the Attica defendants do not want anyone "playing politics with their lives"), but in fact its politics are quite clear. In addition to "Drop the Indictments," the ADC also demands that the 28 demands of the Attica prisoners be implemented "under the supervision of concerned members of the community." This fosters the illusion that justice is actually realizable in capitalist society, that prison reform is the way to prevent "more Atticas," and that "concerned community members" have no class interests of their own to protect. While the SL/RCY wholeheartedly supports every reform which ameliorates prison conditions, we point out that the struggle against the repressive prison system must necessarily be a struggle against the bourgeois state, as the prisons are an integral part of the state apparatus, and that the prisoners' fight must be

tied to that of the workers against capitalism.

The ADC is now in the process of calling for a "united front" for a 13 September demonstration, around the demand: "Drop the Indictments." This move has an ironic character, as the ADC failed to respond to persistent SL/RCY efforts last winter to form a united front around the slogan: "No Reprisals; Drop the Charges Now!" In keeping with Leninist united-front practices, the SL/RCY made it clear that all those who support the main slogan were welcome and would be permitted to raise their own slogans. The ADC has opposed this in the past, standing for uncritical unity around that which is acceptable to the liberals. The SL/RCY has been informally asked to join the united front, but it is not clear whether we will be allowed to raise class-struggle slogans. We support the demand, "Drop the Indictments," and also raise the slogans: "Smash the Prisons!" "For Working-Class Defense of the Attica Prisoners!" "For Workers Power!" "Toward a Workers Government!"

## Letter

### The Draft and the Bourgeois Army

New York  
23 July 1973

Dear Comrades,

Your recent article on the French student strikes ["Lessons of the French Student Struggles—Down with the Bourgeois Army!" *RCYN* No. 18, July-August 1973], while delineating the spectrum of opportunism and centrism of the various pretending revolutionary organizations of the French left, didn't fully bring out the SL/RCY's attitude on the draft and deferments. The exact social role of deferments in French society remains somewhat unclear, but in the U.S. the past student deferments had a definite anti-working-class objective. Thus the SL opposed student deferments as a means of enabling the sons of the bourgeoisie and most middle class elements to avoid military service.

It was on this basis that the SL solidified with the anti-draft movement in the U.S. precipitated by the Vietnam War. It remained, however, for the SL to transcend the idealist, petty-bourgeois outlook of the New Left on the means to fight the draft and the war itself (i.e., draft resistance, draft card burnings, etc.). The SL called for radicalized elements of the anti-war movement not to fight imperialism by means of moral protest, but to, if finally faced with army induction, enter the army with the perspective of organizing the draftees and working-class elements around the issues of their oppression as soldiers and workers and the need to identify with the struggle of the workers and peasants in Vietnam. Thus the SL called not for petty-bourgeois moralizing but for the necessity to go through the experience of the masses of the working class, while bringing one's socialist program into the common struggle.

Comradely,  
Steve B.

[Editor's reply: The writer raises a point that was not fully covered in the article on the French student strikes. The old system of student deferments in the U.S. was a clear example of class privilege biased against the working class, as such "deferments" usually meant exemption from the draft altogether. We opposed deferments on this basis, not because we wanted "the sons of the bourgeoisie and most middle class elements" to do military service, but because we oppose all aspects of class, racial and sexual oppression.

The situation in France is somewhat different in that, while deferments had been available to all university students prior to the institution of the Debré Law which eliminates most of these deferments, nearly all males eventually

had to serve. There was a certain class bias in the old French deferments system, however, as a student who had managed to get himself a family before the age of 25 or 26 could usually obtain an exemption on this basis, and the number of these exemptions was increasing. Workers did not have this opportunity. In addition, deferments were not and are not available to young workers in apprenticeship programs, who risked not being able to re-enter such programs once they had been disrupted by military service. It was for these reasons that the SL/RCY gave critical support to the demand of the French students: "Re-establish and extend the deferments to all youth" (see the article for more details).

It is not correct that the SL "solidarized with the anti-draft movement in the U.S. precipitated by the Vietnam War." The anti-draft movement was based overwhelmingly on petty-bourgeois pacifist ideology and preached a strategy of moralistic draft resistance, to which the SL is opposed. As the writer points out, the SL called for those drafted to go into the army (see "You Will Go!" *Spartacist* No. 11, March-April 1968).

The SL/RCY calls for abolishing the draft in the class-struggle context of the following slogans: "Down with the bourgeois army!" "For workers' self-defense groups based on the trade unions!" "Towards a workers militia!" The draft is the bourgeoisie's most effective tool for constructing its international police machinery. Unless one entertains notions of reforming the army, the most essential part of the bourgeois state apparatus, one must oppose the state's methods of building and strengthening that apparatus. In addition, we are opposed to working-class youth being used as cannon fodder for imperialist wars.

Against those centrist elements on the left, like the French Ligue Communiste of the United Secretariat (which the American Socialist Workers Party supports), who think that the army is a good thing insofar as it gives arms training to the working class, we counterpose arming and training the workers through their own class organizations, the unions. The struggle for this demand will have to take place in opposition to the reformist trade-union bureaucracies—as part of the overall struggle for the Transitional Program and communist leadership in the unions.

Against those who insist that opposition to the draft means support to a volunteer army, like the Class Struggle League grouping, we point out that this argument takes place on the terms of the bourgeoisie, and that we counterpose independent workers militias to any kind of army controlled by the bourgeoisie. The argument that a conscript army will be more easily won over in a pre-revolutionary situation is best answered by Lenin's argument that the only way the decisive section of the army will be won to the side of the working class is by the latter's demonstration of its own political strength and development of its own powerful militias. The conscript army is not, furthermore, some sort of proto-soviet formation. It is socially heterogeneous, tightly controlled by the bourgeoisie, and has been used historically to break strikes, suppress colonial revolutions, fight imperialist wars, and as a major carrier of national chauvinism into the population (e.g., "our boys"). In fact, volunteer or mercenary forces have generally been much less effective than conscript armies, as the former are most often drawn from the fringes of society, e.g., the lumpenproletariat, and are not as dependable fighters as draftees from the petty-bourgeois and working classes.

Thus, the task for socialists is to win workers politically to opposition to the bourgeois army and its draft and to convince them of the need to organize their own self-defense groups. For a more complete discussion of these aspects of the military question, see "Proletarian Military Policy," *RCYN* No. 13, August-September, 1972.]

# ACWM(M-L)-RCY Exchange on Black Question

New Jersey  
10 May 1973

[RCY]

Dear Comrade T.,

We recently got a copy of your newsletter on "Racial Oppression and Working-Class Politics" published by the Revolutionary Marxist Caucus, organizational predecessor of the RCY at the *Guardian* Forum and were interested both in the clear, concrete analysis of racial oppression and contradictions within the working class as well as the section on the state and the trade unions.

I am enclosing some of our material in case it is of interest, as there seemed to be a convergence of line on these questions.

We of course are interested in your comments and criticisms.

Fraternally for the ACWM (M-L)  
[American Communist Workers  
Movement (Marxist-Leninist)]

New York City  
7 June 1973

People's Voice  
ACWM (M-L)  
New Jersey

Dear Comrades,

The Revolutionary Communist Youth (RCY) is the organizational continuation of the Revolutionary Marxist Caucus (RMC). We wish to thank you for your letter concerning our resolution, "Racial Oppression and Working-Class Politics," and the copies of *People's*

*Voice* which present your position on racial oppression. We found this material very interesting. In particular we found a close parallelism between your position on the material foundations of racism and your position on black nationalism and our own.

However, there seems to be a contradiction between your positions on the black question and your identification of these positions with Stalin. For example, you state:

"That some progressive tendencies today call for (or endlessly discuss while hoping it won't arise) the 'right' of black and brown people to form their own state or 'control' their own geographical community (for example, from Boston to Philly!) seems to us at best infantile utopian-scholasticism (mechanical misapplication of Lenin, Stalin and Mao) or at worst a reflection of petty-bourgeois guilty white liberalism. Moreover, lacking any sense of reality, such talk only serves to divide and to encourage racism."

But the belief that blacks in the U.S. constitute a nation originated with Stalin. The "Black Belt" theory, in particular, became the official position of the Communist International at the Sixth World Congress in the summer of 1928 where the views of Stalin had unquestionable hegemony. The documents of the Sixth World Congress on the Negro question are reprinted in the "Negro National Colonial Question" by the Communist League. These documents make it quite clear that the "main Communist slogan must be," at least in the South, "The Right of Self-Determination of the Negroes in the Black Belt." As part of the Comintern adoption of the People's Front at the Seventh World

Congress in 1935, and the CPUSA's turn to the Democratic Party and Roosevelt, the Black Belt theory was dumped for a minimal civil rights platform acceptable to the NAACP and the liberal wing of the Democratic Party.

During WW II, in order to accommodate Roosevelt who in turn had to accommodate the Dixiecrats, the CP showed gross insensitivity to the special oppression of blacks. By the time Stalin had discovered the Black Belt in the late twenties, the Black Belt was already beginning to break up. After 1916 annual emigration of blacks out of the Black Belt averaged 200,000. By WW II black migration into Northern cities had reached a flood. However, after WW II when Stalin dumped Browder, he had the CPUSA reinstate Foster as well as the Black Belt theory. The Black Belt theory has come to be identified, especially by Maoists, with the CP's "third period," with Foster and, hence, as a "left" position and, from the standpoint of Stalinism, an orthodox position. The Communist League even goes so far as to criticize Foster for not putting forth the Black Belt theory more strongly and consistently!

### Stalin and the National Question

Stalin's work, *Marxism and the National Question*, written in 1912 under Lenin's guidance, is a formally correct statement of the Leninist position on the national question. However, even before Lenin's death, Lenin and Stalin came to blows over the national question. From his deathbed, Lenin's last

works were a sharp attack on Stalin's crude and chauvinist handling of the nationalities question in the Soviet Union. After Lenin's death Stalin began a policy of open conciliation of the kulaks and adopted the Bukharinite slogan of "Enrich yourselves." This policy was exported to China where Stalin hailed the KMT as a "workers and peasants party," made Chiang Kai-shek an honorary member of the Comintern's Executive, and the Chinese Communist Party was forced to liquidate into the KMT. Of course, after Chiang Kai-shek massacred the Communists in Shanghai and the kulaks produced a famine through the hoarding of grain and threatened to restore capitalism, Stalin broke with the kulaks both in the Soviet Union and China. He and his co-thinkers in the U.S. have exhibited the same zig-zagging on the black question.

A great deal of confusion on the black  
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## Racial Oppression and Working-Class Politics

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RCY, Box 454, Cooper Sta.,  
NY, NY 10003

# THE "ANTI-IMPERIALIST UNITED FRONT" IN CEYLON—



Mao warmly greets butcher Bandaranaike.

## The "Progressive" Bourgeoisie vs. the Proletariat



Woman weeps while son awaits execution in military jail during Ceylon uprising, 1971.

As a national variant of Stalinism, Maoism is a counter-revolutionary political current reflecting the interests of a parasitic bureaucratic caste whose privileges depend on maintaining some form of *modus vivendi* with imperialism. The Chinese bureaucrats attempt to maneuver among the imperialists, seeking alliances with different sections of the bourgeoisie in the hope that the imperialists will allow them to pursue their utopian and fraudulent scheme of "socialism in one country."

In their pursuit of "peaceful co-existence," they claim that their bourgeois allies are qualitatively less dangerous and more "progressive" than the other (opposing) sections of the world bourgeoisie. From the point of view of the masses there is no such distinction. These alliances which all Stalinists fervently pursue are formed on the bourgeoisie's terms and ultimately

lead to the betrayal of the international working class and all oppressed. This is the essential meaning of the Maoist theory of the "anti-imperialist united front."

### The Guardian and Peking Review Push "Progressive" Bandaranaike

One "important factor in the construction of a united front against imperialism" is Ceylon which has "continued to take a series of progressive stands in foreign affairs" (*Unite the Many, Defeat the Few; China's Revolutionary Line In Foreign Affairs, Guardian*, p. 36). When Bandaranaike, the prime minister of Ceylon, visited China in the middle of last year, she was afforded a "rousing welcome" of 100,000 people (*Peking Review*, 30 June 1972) and a "sincere and friendly talk"

with Mao Tse-tung (*Peking Review*, 7 July 1972). More recently, the Chinese completed work on the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall, "an edifice to honour the memory of the late Sri Lanka [Ceylon] statesman Solomon Bandaranaike" (*Peking Review*, 25 May 1973). According to *Peking Review* under the Bandaranaike the people of Sri Lanka have made "remarkable achievements in safeguarding and developing the national economy and culture" (30 June 1972).

The Maoists have attempted to portray the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) as a party of the "progressive" bourgeoisie, while the United National Party (UNP) represents the real agents of imperialism and the comprador bourgeoisie. This is quite erroneous, for while the UNP was more closely associated with the old English-speaking elite, the SLFP's class roots and

program in no significant way differ from that of the UNP. Solomon Bandaranaike led the SLFP to victory in the 1956 elections on the basis of an appeal to Sinhala chauvinism (the Sinhalese, who are Buddhists, make up the majority of Ceylon's population). While his "Sinhala Only" campaign was ostensibly directed at the "alien" and "privileged" Christian elite, its main thrust was against the Tamil working class and peasantry (the Tamils, representing about 25 percent of the Ceylonese population, are Hindus). Backed by landowners and the Buddhist orders, Bandaranaike sought to divert the social discontent of rural Ceylon into racism and religiosity. One result of his demagoguery was the wild anti-Tamil pogrom of 1958. Among his other achievements were the "Sinhala Only" official language bill and the 1959 Public Security  
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# The "Progressive" Bourgeoisie vs. the Proletariat

Act, a particularly repressive law that has been used ever since to smash strikes and demonstrations.

After Solomon Bandaranaike's assassination, his wife Sirimavo Bandaranaike became prime minister. No new policies were implemented but the government was increasingly threatened by working-class unrest. The government did not hesitate to use the police and army to break strikes. The unrest finally prompted the SLFP to enlist the aid of the ex-Trotskyist Lanka Samasamaja Party (LSSP) which joined a coalition government in late 1964. The only major foreign policy action of this period was the 29 October 1964 agreement between Ceylon and India providing for the forced deportation of 525,000 Indian Tamil residents. The coalition was finally brought down when it sought to restrict freedom of the

press under the guise of nationalizing the right-wing Lake House publishing company.

## SLFP 1970 Elections Program

In 1970 a coalition dominated by the SLFP was returned to office on the basis of a program of reformist promises and extensive demagogic references to socialism and anti-imperialism. Even apart from the youth uprising in April 1971, the government's performance has been quite "unprogressive." After calling for the nationalization of the tea industry, the coalition, once elected, decided that it was not now advisable. It shelved plans to nationalize foreign banks. There has been a wide range of price increases, and a spiralling unemployment rate (now about 14 percent). The foreign debt is around \$1.5 million (*New York Times*, 8 May 1973). The State of Emergency declared by Bandaranaike on 18 March 1971 has not been lifted, there have been massive increases in military and police spending and the government has recently instituted a further crackdown on the press. New legislation provides for a government-appointed council empowered to punish journalists and publishers for "untrue, distorted or improper" reports, including dispatches relating to military and police "likely to be prejudicial to the defence and security" (*New York Times*, 8 May 1973).

Despite the blatantly repressive and pro-capitalist policies of the Bandaranaike, the Chinese bureaucrats insist that the Ceylonese government has waged a resolute struggle against imperialism. Despite all the loud talk against foreign ownership and imperialism the SLFP has taken no actions of any significance. The nationalizations of the Colombo Port Authority and Omnibus Company by the first SLFP government, and the 1965 nationalizations of the insurance companies and the distribution of oil can in no way be regarded as significant actions, but rather as adjustments made in the collective interest of the bourgeoisie. The various foreign policy stands lauded by the Chinese such as the suspension of relations with Israel, the establishing of diplomatic relations with North Korea, North Vietnam and the Provisional Government of South Vietnam, the support of a United Nations resolution calling for the Indian Ocean to be declared "a zone of peace," and of course the *bonhomie* with the Chinese bureaucracy are gestures which in no way affect any bourgeois class interests in Ceylon. At the same time the government, despite its anti-imperialism, has continued and increased its dealings with the various imperialist financial agencies, such as the World Bank. The Chinese are reduced to describing the declaration of the Republic of Sri Lanka, itself an explicit and demagogic appeal to Sinhalese chauvinism, as "a significant victory won by her people in their protracted struggle against imperialism and for safeguarding national independence" (*Peking Review*, 2 June 1972).

The leader of the pro-Peking Sri Lanka Communist Party, N. Sanmugathasan, has a more accurate description of the SLFP's "struggle" for independence:

"The commanding heights of its economy still continued to be occupied by foreign imperialism. The greater part of the tea and rubber plantations which still brought in the greater share of the national wealth of the country, the majority of the country's banks, the import-export trade, shipping—all re-

mained in foreign imperialist hands. The puppets that danced on the political platform were made in Ceylon but the invisible strings with which they are manipulated are still pulled from London and Washington.

"Despite all the loud and empty talk of socialism, no fundamental changes were made in this situation after the United Front government came to power in May 1970. Instead, the people were treated to the sight of intellectual imbeciles holding forth about building socialism while the majority of the country's money spinners—the tea and rubber plantations and the banks—continued in foreign imperialist hands. New definitions of socialism meant greater discipline, hard work and tightening of belts. But they saw no matching sacrifices at the top. Members of Parliament voted themselves additional allowances."

—N. Sanmugathasan, "An Analysis of the April Events in Ceylon," *Indonesian Tribune*, Vol. VI, No. 2, 1972

## Temporary Blocs and Strategic Political Alliances

Workers organizations may form a temporary military bloc with a section of the bourgeoisie for joint action in a particular struggle. The interests of the world proletariat dictate the duty of supporting and aiding oppressed peoples in their national struggles against imperialism, even if "led" by the bourgeoisie or the semi-feudal aristocracy (e.g., the insurrection in Morocco in the 1920's led by Abd-el-Krim). Thus Trotsky called on all workers organizations to aid the Chinese war of liberation against the Japanese, irrespective of their attitude toward the government of Chiang Kai-shek.

Moreover, in some cases, the working class out of its own interests not only defends actions of a bourgeois government but may actively support such actions. Thus Trotsky supported the Mexican nationalizations of British oil interests. But in all such cases it is imperative that workers organizations never abandon their programs or political and organizational independence and that they defend the oppressed not only against the foreign imperialists but also the national bourgeois exploiters. It is a betrayal of Marxism, however, to form a political or strategic alliance or long-term bloc with any bourgeois formation. This is exactly what China has done, thereby enhancing the legitimacy of the Bandaranaike regime and misleading the masses, e.g., Chou En-lai's 2 June 1972 "Message to Mrs. Bandaranaike" to "wish that the government and people of the Republic of Sri Lanka under Your Excellency's leadership will continuously achieve new successes in the cause of safeguarding national independence, unity and sovereignty and building their country" (*Peking Review*).

The Maoists frequently claim China's friendly and diplomatic relations with bourgeois states "should not have any effect on the revolutionary forces in those countries" (*Unite the Many...*, p. 34). The exigencies of a political alliance with the bourgeoisie require that a bourgeois program be retained, so that at best the alliance promotes illusions about the "progressive" regimes and at worst leads to explicit endorsement of bourgeois reaction.

In the case of the youth uprising, the Chinese endorsed the actions of the Bandaranaike government in repressing the uprising by slaughtering over 15,000 people and imprisoning 14,000 young people. In defense of counter-revolution, the Maoists must abandon the basic tenets of Marxism.

It is a Leninist duty to support every struggle of the working masses against their oppression. Support is unconditional in terms of military defense, but not of the policies which are frequently guarantees for defeat. The Maoists claim to support all "genuine" anti-imperialist struggles, but it turns out that "genuine" is defined according to the narrow national concerns of the Chinese bureaucracy. The Maoists attempted to excuse this refusal to aid and defend the rebels by arguing that the JVP (People's Liberation Front) did not have a protracted guerrilla warfare strategy. In addition, while making certain correct criticisms of the JVP, the Maoists parroted the Sinhalese bourgeoisie's completely unfounded claims that the JVP was subject to foreign manipulation and reactionary control. Though Ceylonese Maoist Sanmugathasan is forced to acknowledge that "whatever be the questionable nature of the leadership, the rank and file seems to have been honestly revolutionary-minded, with a sense of dedication that must be admired and a willingness to sacrifice even their lives..." (*Analysis of the April Events in Ceylon*, p. 34), the *Guardian* decided the following:

"It does not seem likely that Chinese revolutionaries would have supported such an uprising under any conditions, containing as it did elements of adventurism and ultra-'leftism' without a mass base, led by a non-Leninist party influenced by Trotskyism. Such tactics are diametrically opposed to the ideas of people's war the CCP has worked out over the last 50 years."

—*Unite the Many...*, p. 36

By these criteria, Lenin was wrong to defend the Easter 1916 uprising in Ireland. Lenin had a reply to such critics:

"We would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the proletariat's great war of liberation for socialism, we did not know how to utilize every popular movement against every single disaster imperialism brings in order to intensify and extend the crisis. If we were, on the one hand, to repeat in a thousand keys the declaration that we are 'opposed' to all national oppression and, on the other, to describe the heroic revolt of the most mobile and enlightened section of certain classes in an oppressed nation against the oppressors as a 'putsch,' we should be sinking to the same level of stupidity as the Kautskyites."

—*Lenin, Works*, Vol. 22, p. 35

## Coexistence with Butchery of the Masses

The Maoists also attempt to justify their refusal to condemn the Bandaranaike Government's repression (as well as Yahya Khan's butchery in Bangladesh) by citing the bourgeois doctrine of non-interference in another state's internal affairs, one of Mao's five principles of coexistence. In contradiction to the "key" principle, however, China gives material aid "to the liberation movements in South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos as well as strong backing to revolutionaries in Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Palestine, Southern Africa, Northern Ireland and many other countries" (*Unite the Many...*, p. 34). The doctrine of non-interference is simply a handy excuse to avoid the proletarian internationalist duty of defense of an uprising of the oppressed where this conflicts with the immediate demands of the anti-imperialist alliance with the "progressive" bourgeoisie.

Moreover, in the case of Ceylon, China not only refused to defend the rebels but gave explicit political support to the Bandaranaike Government. Chou En-lai's message to Bandaranaike (published in *Ceylon Daily News*, 27 May 1971) reads in part:

"Following Chairman Mao Tse-tung's teaching, the Chinese people have all along opposed ultra-'left' and right opportunism in their protracted revolutionary struggles. We are glad to see that thanks to the efforts of Your Excellency and the Ceylon Government, the chaotic situation created by a handful of persons who style themselves 'Guevarists' and into whose ranks foreign spies have sneaked has been

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## RCY Events

### ANN ARBOR

Forum—

#### TOWARDS THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

Speaker: Mary Jo McAllister, RCY National Committee, formerly of the Buffalo Marxist Collective Executive Committee. Rm. 4202, Student Activities Bldg., U. of Michigan. Tues., 18 Sept., 7:30 PM. Forum will include discussion of black and women's oppression.

### BAY AREA

Forum—

#### DEFENDING THE UNITED FARM WORKERS: A COMMUNIST STRATEGY

Speaker: Sandra Palacios, RCY. To be given in Berkeley, Oakland and San Francisco the second week of Sept. For more information: (415) 653-4668.

### BUFFALO

Forum—

#### RACIAL OPPRESSION AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

Speaker: Reuben Samuels, RCY National Chairman, SL Central Committee. Rm. 337, Norton Union, SUNY. Thurs., 20 Sept., 7:30 PM.

### NEW ORLEANS

Class Series—

#### INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM, 1920-1940

Weekly 10-part series begins Sun., 9 Sept., 7 PM. For location, call (504) 866-8384.

### NEW YORK

Forum—

#### RACIAL OPPRESSION AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

Speaker: Reuben Samuels. Wash. Sq. Methodist Church. Sat., 15 Sept., 7:30 PM; Thurs., 13 Sept., CCNY, room to be announced. For more information: (212) 925-5665.

Class Series—

#### BASIC MARXISM

Bi-weekly class meets every other Thurs., 7:30 PM. First class in Sept. meets on the 6th. Rm. 522, 260 W. Broadway (near Canal St.), Manhattan.

Class Series—

#### STRUGGLE FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Bi-weekly class meets every other Thurs., 7:30 PM. First class in Sept. meets on the 13th. Rm. 522, 260 W. Broadway (near Canal St.), Manhattan.

Continued from page 4

## The "Anti-Imperialist United Front" in Ceylon

brought under control. We believe that as a result of Your Excellency's leadership and the cooperation and support of the Ceylonese people these acts of rebellion plotted by reactionaries at home and abroad for the purpose of undermining the interests of the Ceylonese people are bound to fail."

Chou went on to agree to provide a long-term interest-free loan of 150 million rupees in convertible foreign exchange currency and to offer other material assistance. In another report never denied by the Chinese, the Ceylonese ambassador reported:

"[Chou] had also expressed regret that China was unable to provide military aid to Ceylon as Chinese ships carrying arms to Tanzania had left Colombo before Ceylon's request was made. Mr. Chou En-lai had said that China could give both financial and military aid to the Ceylon Government. The Chinese Premier in conclusion had promised wholehearted support to the Ceylon Government, saying, 'Whom else can we support in Ceylon except the Government of Mrs. Bandaranaike.'"

—Ceylon News, 24 June 1971

### U.S., USSR, China Bloc Against Ceylonese Uprising

While absolutely no evidence has been produced to show "foreign complicity" in the youth uprising, imperialist aid to the government was not slow in arriving. Britain and the U.S. rushed arms and equipment to the Ceylonese government, and India and Pakistan found some basis of agreement by also providing military aid. The deformed workers states of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia joined this veritable United Nations aid project in defense of bourgeois rule. In this situation, the Maoists claim:

"It was only the correct diplomatic behavior of the Chinese and their generous aid... that prevented the government sliding completely into the imperialist camp."

—"Analysis of the April Events in Ceylon," p. 37

The Revolutionary Union adds:

"Of course, some sections of the Ceylonese people took part in this rebellion, because there are real injustices, real oppression in Ceylon. But once again, this movement in Ceylon would not have weakened, but strengthened imperialism and so China could not have supported it, but had to oppose it."

—China's Foreign Policy..., p. 40

On these grounds, the Bolsheviks ought to have sent arms to the German Social-Democratic government that presided over the crushing of the Spartacist uprising and the murder of Luxemburg and Liebknecht in 1919, as a precaution against the return of the reactionary/militarist government!!

The "anti-imperialist united front" is not a strategy for world revolution, but a diplomatic maneuver to protect the narrow national interests of the Chinese bureaucracy. The Chinese Stalinists' support for the butchery carried out in defense of imperialism by the "progressive" Bandaranaike is not an isolated mistake, but the logical outcome of the counter-revolutionary doctrine of "the broadest united front against imperialism." The massacres in Ceylon, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Sudan will not be stopped by alliances with "progressive" national bourgeoisies but by the building of a genuine revolutionary party which can transform spontaneous and misdirected uprisings into proletarian revolution. ■

Continued from page 3

## ACWM(M-L)-RCY Exchange...

question has been created by the SWP. For at least the last decade the SWP has simply applied to the black question the "national-cultural autonomy" of the Austro-Marxists against which Lenin polemicized in all his writings on the national question. The SWP claims that their position is based on conversations between members of the SWP and Trotsky in the thirties republished as *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*. However, a careful reading of the pamphlet shows that Trotsky and, to a certain extent, the SWP members he talked with were not completely familiar with the black question—which Trotsky mistakenly thought was analogous to the problem of Eastern European nationalities, and he laid out the guidelines accordingly. Nothing he said in those discussions, however, can be construed to support the present policy of the SWP.

### Revolutionary Trotskyism vs. the SWP

We realize that a certain amount of the animosity felt toward Trotskyism on the left is due to the present practice of the SWP. But while the SWP and its predecessors were valiant revolutionary organizations for three decades, in the late fifties the SWP underwent a qualitative degeneration. The SWP is now no more Trotskyist than the CP is Leninist. The Spartacist League, the parent organization of the RCY, originated as the Revolutionary Tendency within the SWP against that organization's degeneration. Expelled in 1963, the Spartacist League is the embodiment of revolutionary Trotskyism in this country.

The RMC, the organizational predecessor of the RCY, was founded as a caucus in SDS following the June 1969 split. It was launched by the Spartacist League and our supporters in SDS. We stood opposed to both the economist (against which Lenin polemicized in *What Is to Be Done?*) and social-workerist Worker-Student Alliance of PL and to the vicarious "Third World" nationalism of the other wings of SDS. We stood for turning SDS into a genuine, broad-based, non-exclusionary socialist youth organization which could play a real if auxiliary role in the transformation of the labor movement into a revolutionary socialist instrument. However, since PL transformed SDS into its front group and both it and SDS moved rapidly rightward culminating in their "anti-racist textbook campaign" which represented a complete abandoning of even the pretense of a proletarian orientation in favor of academic liberalism, we were forced to split from SDS last year.

In the meantime, the RMC as well as the Spartacist League had undergone substantial growth. Of great importance was the SL's fusion with the Communist Working Collective in September 1971 which laid the basis for the transformation of the SL into the nucleus of the proletarian vanguard party. As part of this transformation, and based on the experience of the first four Congresses of the Communist International and corresponding conferences of the Young Communist International, the RMC was transformed into the youth section of the Spartacist League, the Revolutionary Communist Youth. Beginning with the proposition that Maoism does not provide a strategy for proletarian revolution in the advanced industrial countries, the Communist Working Collective developed from Maoism to Trotskyism. Likewise, another Maoist group, the Buffalo Marxist Collective, broke with PL over *Road to Revolution III*, and through a process of political

discussion fused with the RCY last year.

Both the black question and the question of China and Maoism have played an important role in our development. I send you under separate cover key documents of the Spartacist League which relate to both these questions.... We hope to hear your response to our letter and documents soon.

Communist Greetings,  
Reuben Samuels  
[for the RCY]

[We have not as yet received a response from the ACWM(M-L).]■

Continued from page 8

## Black Oppression and Proletarian Revolution

independent working-class party. The first "Address" of the NLU issued in July 1867 stated:

"...we are of the opinion that the interests of the labor cause demand that all workmen be included within its ranks, without regard to race or nationality; and that the interests of the workmen of America especially require that the formation of trade unions, eight-hour leagues and other labor organizations, should be encouraged among the colored race; that they be instructed in the true principles of labor reform, and that they be invited to cooperate with us in the general labor undertaking."

While this was an obviously progressive statement for its time, it hedged the question of whether black workers should be admitted to the *existing* trade unions or organized into separate unions. The NLU continued to hedge this question although its 1869 convention was attended by nine black delegates and positive proposals were laid out for organizing black workers.

The first congress of the NLU endorsed the motion of the German socialist Schlegel for a labor party. But under the leadership of William H. Sylvis the labor party was understood as more an instrument for monetary reform than for proletarian power. Thus in the NLU circular announcing the formation of the Labor Reform Party Sylvis states:

"Our objective point is a new monetary system, a system that will take from a few men the power to control the money, and give to the people a cheap, secure and abundant currency."

In addition to having an agrarian inverted Marcusite funny money theory, Sylvis and the Labor Reform Party did not see the contradictory nature of Reconstruction. While they correctly attacked such institutions as the Freedmen's Bureau as sources of corruption for government officials and as a vehi-

cle for the aggrandizement of Northern capital, the Labor Reform Party's call for the simple dismantling of the machinery of Reconstruction without providing an alternative program (worker-farmer militias, distribution of the land) alienated potential black support.

### The Black Petty Bourgeoisie and the Black Proletariat

Confronted with an embryonic trade-union movement which was often exclusionist and a Labor Reform Party whose main plank was agrarian greenbackism and which was insensitive to the revolutionary side of Reconstruction, black labor leaders like Isaac Meyers organized a Colored National Labor Convention which was held in Washington in December 1869. The Convention was open to both white unionists, the NLU sending three delegates, and the black petty bourgeoisie, and indeed it was black lawyers, preachers, teachers and merchants rather than workers which dominated the Convention. They were more interested in keeping black labor tied to the Republican Party than advancing a class-struggle program and one black Republican who attended the Convention, Langston, attempted to exclude all supporters of the Labor Reform Party. A Colored National Labor Union was set up which was dominated by prominent Republicans. In 1871 Frederick Douglass had replaced Meyers as its President, and by 1872 it was essentially liquidated into the Republican Party.

At the 1870 convention of the NLU, Samuel P. Cummings, president of the largest trade union in the country (the 50,000-member shoemakers union), leader of the New England Reform League, a long-time abolitionist and defender of equal rights for black workers, and one of the NLU delegates to the Colored National Labor Convention, spearheaded the drive to deny the floor to the black Republican Langston, and to endorse a resolution calling for a National Labor Reform Party. Both motions carried after heated floor debate, the former by 49 to 23 and the latter by 60 to 5. The Labor Party resolution read in part:

"...inasmuch as both the present political parties are dominated by the non-producing classes the highest interest of our colored fellow citizens is with the workmen who like themselves are slaves of capital and politicians."

Although they were important first steps toward black-white labor unity and working-class political independence, the inability of the NLU to really break with Jim Crow trade unionism and the Labor Reform Party and to champion the democratic rights of the black masses fundamentally limited these movements.

[Part II of this series will appear in the November-December *Young Spartacus*.]

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Organ of the Revolutionary Communist Youth,  
youth section of the Spartacist League

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The RCY has changed the name of its press in accordance with its stabilization as a regular bi-monthly paper, reflecting the RCY's growth and increasing influence as a vital, interventionist Leninist youth movement. In taking the name *Young Spartacus*, the RCY links itself to the revolutionary traditions of the Spartacus Youth League, youth group of the early U.S. Trotskyist opposition.

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Continued from page 1

## Fight Special Oppression of Young Workers!

deepest economic and social crisis in the history of capitalism. Working youth, as a specially oppressed group, suffered even more severe unemployment rates than the population as a whole, while child labor increased. The furious war to depress wages and lower the standard of living waged against the workers by the capitalist class found child labor to be one of its most effective weapons. However, the bourgeoisie, which had been so solidly behind child labor in the past that two federal laws limiting it had been ruled unconstitutional, was now split over the issue. As *Young Spartacus*, the paper of the Spartacus Youth League, youth section of the Communist League of America (the early Trotskyist Opposition), revealed, it was hardly deep-felt concern for the welfare of the child laborer which caused Roosevelt and his bourgeois supporters to support the proposed Child Labor Amendment:

"The mature laborer can be obtained at similar wages; they want to give more employment to adult workers; they want to utilize the present discontent of the workers by throwing them this liberal concession."

—April 1934

*Young Spartacus*, although supporting the Amendment as necessary to the protection of children, understood that kicking children out of industry would often simply mean a reduction in family incomes:

"But what will the thousands of children who are thrown out of industry do?..."

"This is not provided for. The American labor movement which has for decades fought for the abolition of child labor should raise two additions to the amendment. One, state maintenance of children replaced; two, against the cuts in the school budgets and for the extension of educational facilities. Otherwise the children will become an additional burden on the hands of the workers' families."

The system of the nuclear family, which the bourgeoisie glorifies as natural and essential to human happiness, thus becomes a trap in which children are to starve in nature's name, since only their unemployed fathers are responsible for filling their empty bellies, not the capitalist society!

### FDR's "Aid" to Young Workers

Another one of the Roosevelt administration's "liberal" reforms for young workers was the prettified prison camp program known as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) which was run primarily by Army officers and did very little conservation work. Its main purpose was to obtain labor for \$1 a day to do work such as building bridges and roads for which regular workers would be paid \$4 or \$5 a day. The CCC, begun in early 1933, and the National Youth Administration (NYA) ("more nuts in the alphabet soup," said *Young Spartacus*), begun in 1935, were the New Deal programs for the unemployed youth, who numbered as high as 8,000,000. Aside from the fact that these programs "provided" for a very small number of these youth (the NYA was planned to administer to 500,000, providing jobs paying \$15 a month!), they were actually plans for organized scabbing, and later were used for the militarization of the youth in preparation for WWII.

The NYA set up an "apprenticeship program," a ready source of cheap, young labor in the name of aid to the unemployed youth. This was nothing more than a direct attack on the already pitiful standard of living of the working class during the Depression years, using the dying category of apprentice as an excuse for lower wages.

The CCC was, if possible, even more pernicious. Presented in government propaganda as an extended Boy Scout-like vacation in the woods, the CCC camps were little more than labor camps administered by the military and used to exploit young workers (aged 18 to 25), drive down wages, isolate the youth from the political life of the cities, and foster in them a jingoist militarism which could have laid a partial basis for fascism. The camps were racially segregated, completely closed to women, and regimented to the extent that passes were needed to leave the grounds. "Privileges" could be taken away for any lapse in discipline and daily military drills were more the rule than the exception, becoming even more common as the war drew nearer. The camps were hotbeds of discontent; strikes and desertions over food, conditions and work hours were common. A particularly clever maneuver of the government was to give the Corpsman only \$5 of his \$30 monthly wage, sending the remainder to his family and then taking his family off relief! "Misbehavior" was grounds for discharge and a refusal of relief to the family. Such programs are typical of the bourgeoisie's idea of aid to unemployed youth!

The youth section of the Fourth International put forth consistently class-struggle demands around the problems of working youth (see "Founding Conference of the Fourth International: Resolution on the Youth," *RCYN* No. 17, May-June 1973). This stood counterposed to both the capitalists' manipulation of the suffering produced by their own reactionary system, and to the eventual capitulation of the Young Communist League, youth group of the Stalinist Communist Party, which, after the dissolution of the Stalin-Hitler Pact, supported the CCC, Roosevelt and WWII.

### Young Workers Today

The overall rate of unemployment is not as high now as it was during the Depression, but youth still make up the largest section of the unemployed. In the '30's, half of those demanding relief were youth aged 16 to 24, although they comprised only 1/6 of the general population. In 1972, the average unemployment rate for civilian workers was 5.6 percent, while for youth aged 16 to 24, it was 12.7 percent. (It is necessary to realize, of course, that these are government figures which do not count those who have given up looking for work out of despair and are either on welfare or have been forced into the lumpenproletariat. Nor does it count housewives, draftees or those dependent upon parents.) And for any youth who happens also to be black and/or female, the unemployment rates increase to Depression levels, up to 38.5 percent for black women aged 16 to 19!

Many of the jobs which the youth have been able to obtain are low-paying jobs in unorganized industry, often the service industry; jobs classified as "dead-end" jobs by the employer are reserved for the inexperienced young. And Congress is considering a bill to exempt those under 18 from the minimum wage! Entry into the skilled crafts often requires going through an apprenticeship program lasting anywhere from 2 to 6 years, during which time the apprentice's wages, which start at 50 percent of the regular wage, go up to 95 percent as he gains experience. Often these apprenticeship programs are unnecessarily long and simply act to provide the capitalists with cheaper but fully competent labor. The apprenticeship programs are run according to federal guidelines set up under the Apprentice-

ship and Training Act of 1937 which demands, among other things, a joint employer-union committee to run the programs. It also calls for tests to determine an applicant's "ability to learn" and his mastery of high school skills such as reading and mathematics. Such tests are obviously biased against non-English-speaking and ghetto working-class youth, whose poorly funded, under-staffed, over-crowded schools do not prepare anyone for anything. While training programs remain in any way under the control of the capitalist class, even the necessary acquisition of skills will be used to divide the working class and hold down wages.

The role of the labor bureaucracy, the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class, is to consciously play on these divisions in the class. By allowing long probationary periods and non-unionized apprentices within a "closed shop" plant, the union bureaucrats are providing the bourgeoisie with a potential pool of ready-made, on-the-spot scabs. In the United Auto Workers (UAW), a probationary worker receives from 10 to 20 cents less an hour, receives no vacation pay even for legal or contractual holidays, no medical or life insurance coverage of any kind, no seniority rights, has no access to the grievance procedure (except after 30 days, if he is fired "without cause") and before 30 days can be fired at management's whim. Often speed-up grievances are "solved" by taking the seniority employee off the job and replacing him with a new hire. The large turnover at auto plants which results partly because of the difficult probationary period, weakens the union and provides the company with a substantial pool of cheaper labor. Of course, the bureaucrats explain this by saying it is necessary to test a worker to see if he is worthy of being a company employee!

### NMU: The Group System

One union especially guilty of playing into the bosses' hands by fostering divisions between the younger and older workers is the NMU, controlled by Joseph Curran until last June, when his hand-picked successor, Shannon Wall, was elected to the Presidency. The Curran regime created the "Group" system to comply with the Taft-Hartley Law, to "provide shipping rights for seamen who did not want to join the union," a line fully in accordance with the systematic class collaboration of Curran and his suite of labor fakers who prefer to let the bourgeois government, never the union rank and file, decide what is best for the union.

Until February 1972, when a National Labor Relations Board ruling changed some of the rules, the Group system divided the seamen into two parts: Group I, the bookmen, were full voting members of the union and had seniority over all members of Group II, who, although they had to pay a \$40 quarterly "services fee" (same amount as union dues), had no voting rights or union benefits, could not attend union meetings, and whose status with respect to rights to jobs kept changing arbitrarily. In order to advance from Group II to Group I, a seaman had to have 800 days shipping time within a five-year period; failure to spend at least 220 days per year at sea meant loss of Group I status. This resulted in job-trusting among a small group of the older, more experienced seamen, who were able to work throughout the year, while other seamen were completely squeezed out of the industry for lack of jobs! With the rise of automation and containerization and runaway shipping to the foreign ports, where cheaper, non-union labor is available, the job situation is acute: The union has lost almost 3/4 of its deep-sea jobs since 1963. This along with the terrible conditions, the pay (less than \$100 a week) and a day's work often spread out over a period of twelve hours caused widespread discontent.

In February 1972, an NLRB decision about a suit filed against the union by an ex-bookman who had lost his Group I status as a result of having a shore-

side job for two years, gave Group II seamen union membership and voting rights, but no benefits, and maintained their shipping status as it was, i.e., they have access to a job only after Group I seamen have refused it. The Group system is clearly discriminatory against the younger, newer membership, and is a major cause of division in the union, as the younger men fight for an income and the older men fight for enough sea time to qualify for a pension.

### Militant-Solidarity Caucus Fights for Group II Rights

The only real answer to the problems of the NMU seamen is the international class-struggle approach offered by the Militant-Solidarity Caucus, which ran Gene Herson as candidate for president in the recent union elections. The M-SC began as the West Coast Committee for NMU Democracy, set up in 1968, when James Morrissey's Committee for NMU Democracy proved interested only in democracy for James Morrissey, a former Curranite who prefers filing suit after suit against the union in the bourgeois courts to a working-class political struggle against the shipping companies. The M-SC calls for an international union to bring all wages up to the American equivalent as the only way to end runaway shipping, an end to the Group system and institution of rotational shipping (7 months at sea, 7 months on shore with unemployment and vacation pay), and a four-watch system with the six-hour day (application of the "30 for 40" demand to seamen)—which would create enough jobs for more than the 25,000 seamen presently in the NMU.

When the Group II Rights Committee of the M-SC had a demonstration in New York in June 1971 in favor of rotational shipping, both the Curran

## Corrections

*RCYN* No. 17 ("What Defense Policy for Revolutionaries?" May-June, p.7) incorrectly refers to "the Japanese supporters of the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine." The reference should have been to "the Japanese supporters of Dr. Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine." The corrected passage would then read:

"At the same time, we distinguish between the self-destructive substitutionism of the Weathermen, who chose as the targets for their bombs the symbols of the bourgeois order, and the indiscriminate terror of some elements in the Irish Republican Army, or the Japanese supporters of Dr. Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine."

There is an incorrect formulation concerning the united front in *RCYN* No. 18 ("Lessons of the French Student Struggles—Down with the Bourgeois Army!" July-August 1973, p. 3). The passage reads:

"In the recent May Day demonstrations (as in the past) the OCI dispersed its cadre throughout the PCF sections without raising its own banners and slogans. While it may be tactically useful to follow a limited dispersal policy, the failure to also have one's own contingent with one's own banners and slogans amounts to a substitution of the united-front tactic for the independent programmatic intervention of the party."

The OCI's policy of cadre dispersal in the May Day march was, however, *not* an application of the Leninist united-front tactic, but was the abandonment of this tactic in favor of a programmatically-liquidationist action. This passage further implies that the "independent programmatic intervention of the party" is counterposed to the united-front tactic. This is, of course, not the case. The united front provides for the "independent programmatic intervention of the party" in the framework of common action with other working-class tendencies. This concept is clearly and more fully explained elsewhere in the article.

regime and Morrissey at first showed interest in the issue. Vice President Bocker told representatives of the Committee to petition the port agent in each city about being admitted to union meetings, thereby passing the buck and trying to protect himself from having to take responsibility for a position on the issue. One week later, Morrissey refused to support a resolution demanding rights for Group II seamen because "the Group II issue is not popular at this time."

The M-SC, with its Group II Rights Committee, is the only grouping in the union to have fought consistently, militantly and on a class-struggle basis against the special oppression of young seamen. This work has been part of their ongoing fight for a program that will defend working-class interests: maritime unity, international labor solidarity, an end to all discriminatory divisions and bureaucratic privileges within the union, nationalize shipping under workers control, defense of the left against government repression, oust the bureaucrats, for a workers party based on the trade unions that will fight for a workers government.

**SWP, Maoists: Petty-Bourgeois Youth Work**

A survey of the youth work being carried out by other groups in the American left leaves little to admire. The youth front groups of the ex-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party and most of the Maoist organizations (e.g., the Revolutionary Union's Attica Brigade) present an explicitly petty-bourgeois approach to the youth question, orienting almost entirely to students who, in the case of the Young Socialist Alliance, are then mobilized to do the moralistic, protest-politics footwork for the liberal bourgeoisie, or, in the case of the Attica Brigade, to tail after the union bureaucracy by doing uncritical strike-support work or after petty-bourgeois "Third World" nationalist hustlers of all stripes. Recent attempts by the Labor Committee to resurrect youth work based on the recently disastrous, would-be lumpen, Weatherman methodology of win-over-the-gangs (on a "program" of "pure rage") to smash the Mafia and then capitalism deserve little more than a sneer from the Marxists.

Of those groups at least pretending to a working-class orientation in their youth work (e.g., the Workers League's Young Socialists and the Communist Party's Young Workers Liberation League), none has demonstrated a proletarian revolutionary thrust or presented a class-struggle program.

**YS: The "Community" and Youth Vanguardism**

The Young Socialists constantly talk about "working-class youth" but their orientation is towards the "community" (which is socially heterogeneous), in second-rate imitation of the now largely defunct Panther community work. Furthermore, their press is heavy with classless, youth vanguardist rhetoric about the need for youth (all youth, any youth?) to "take the lead" in all social struggles. The YS's "fight" around unemployment consists of repeated rallies, street parties and basketball games rather than a conscious attempt to strengthen the work of trade-union caucuses based on the *Transitional Program* (the WL neither supports nor attempts to build such caucuses) and to engage in strike-support work, remaining critical of the union bureaucracies. The fight for full employment and organization of the unorganized must originate in the trade unions, led by militant caucuses in opposition to the reformist bureaucracies. A Leninist youth group sees the importance of doing youth work in the working class itself (where the social power is) and also of student work, of the recruitment of young intellectuals to lifetime professional revolutionism. The real work of the YS, however, differs little from the showpiece antics of the Labor Committee.

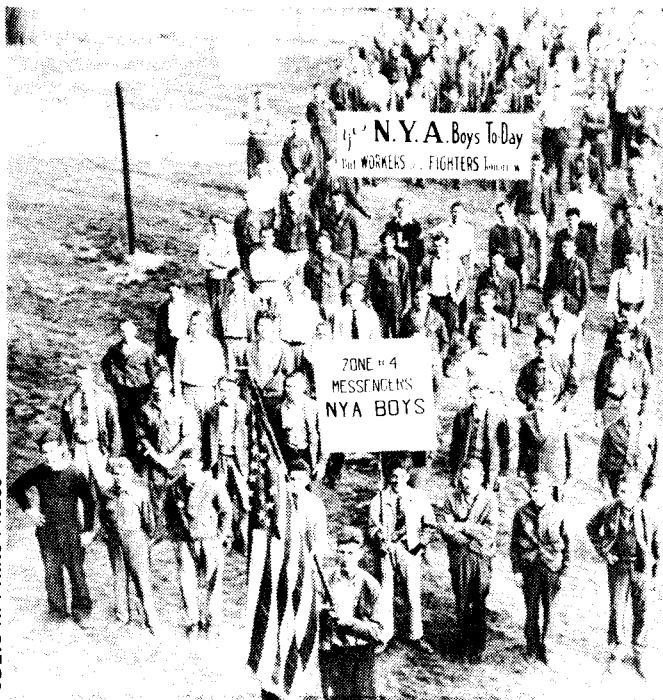
And within the framework of a fundamentally askew orientation, the YS exhibits its programmatically bankrupt

policies. The *Young Socialist (YS)*, paper of the YS, which has devoted many pages to the widespread unemployment among youth and the recent government budget cuts that are eliminating funding for programs like the Job Corps and the Neighborhood Youth Corps and for scholarship and loan programs which enabled a small number of working-class and minority youth to attend college, can only demand an end to these budget cuts and an abstract "end to unemployment." Their resolution on unemployment, printed in the August 1973 YS, raised no slogans which would extend the struggle for full employment beyond the boundaries of capitalism:

"Whereas: Unemployment among youth has soared due to the policies of Nixon, through budget cuts and the elimination of job programs;

"Whereas: Nixon has acted in the interest of the most vicious and desperate employers and corporations by encouraging speedup and increasing production with less workers;

"Whereas: This has created a situation where thousands of youth are unemploy-



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ed, so that employers can always be guaranteed cheap labor for below union wages, and Nixon himself pushes for sub-minimum wages for youth;

"Whereas: Watergate reveals that this same Nixon has conspired to destroy the democratic rights of the working class;

"And whereas: The trade unions were at the top of the White House enemies list:

"Then be it resolved that the AFL-CIO demand:

"Full employment for all!

"A 30 hour week and 40 hours pay!

"More training programs for youth!

"To implement this the AFL-CIO must act now to:

"Force Nixon to resign! Hold a new election!

"Call a Congress of Labor to build a labor party!"

The main thrust of this resolution is to point to Nixon, not the entire capitalist system, as responsible for the special oppression of youth. But high unemployment existed long before Nixon cut the budget! It does not pose the question of class power, but only of reforms of the capitalist system. The YS has done a lot of complaining about the government budget cuts but, in spite of the severity of the Crisis, does not deem it necessary to call for the overthrow of capitalism. More Job Corps programs is all that is on the agenda today. The YS, although it has pointed out the inadequacy of the Job Corps and Neighborhood Youth Corps in so many words, implicitly supports these programs, since it blames the rise in unemployment on their elimination. In fact, the Job Corps and Neighborhood Youth Corps, while tiny weeds compared to Roosevelt's New Deal jungle in their much smaller scope, serve a similar purpose.

**Job Corps: "Hope" for Unemployed Youth?**

The Job Corps, which the YS describes as "the only hope for training and jobs for hundreds of young men, as the shocking unemployment rates soar" (YS, April 1973), was set up under the Office of Economic Opportunity as a

training program and pays its enrollees \$30 a month plus \$50 a month to be received only upon completion of training. The enrollees must live in the Job Corps Center where they are supervised as if in prison, require a pass to leave the Center, and can be punished by loss of privileges or discharge for profanity, failure to conform with dress codes or Center schedules, possession of drugs or alcohol, or homosexual behavior. The "training" received often means doing work at a plant or office which could be performed by a fully paid employee.

Even the government admits that the Job Corps has done little towards accomplishing its stated goal (increasing the employability of "disadvantaged" youth). Among those who had been in the Job Corps by the end of 1971, 8 percent were unemployed, and of the remaining 92 percent, a quarter were in the army and the average hourly wage of those employed was \$1.87 (*Manpower Report of the President, 1972*). And this is the "only hope" for unemployed

**FDR's National Youth Administration "boys" were subjected to oppressive camp regulations, were used as cheap labor and scabs and later were part of militarization plans for WW II.**

youth, according to the YS! Class-struggle politics, as exemplified by the program of the Militant-Solidarity Caucus in its fight for leadership of the National Maritime Union, is rejected by the WL/YS, which supported the rotten reformist Morrissey over Herson's class-struggle program in the recent NMU elections. The YS prefers to leave youth at the mercy of the philanthropy of the bourgeoisie—a fake philanthropy which tries to hide an overpowering demand for vicious exploitation!

**YWLL: Pressuring the Bourgeoisie**

The YWLL is even more explicit in its reformism. Its program resolves itself into the old minimum/maximum program of the social democrats. Despite isolated paragraphs about the necessity for socialism, all their concrete demands and actions do not challenge the rule of the capitalist class. For example, the YWLL proposal to fight unemployment states:

"[It is important to] organize delegations to visit your local labor council, your State Assemblyman, your Congressman, to demand jobs and adequate income, including for first-time job seekers. Sign up people to come to Washington [for the May unemployment rally], so we can visit our Congressmen on Monday morning to tell them that we want jobs, and we want them now!"

—"Unemployment Kills—Fight for Jobs," *Young Worker*, May 1971

It is possible to tell the bourgeoisie just about anything; getting them to do anything about it is another matter. Perhaps the YWLL's idea of making a revolution is to write to the congressmen and tell them that we want the dictatorship of the proletariat!

The Stalinists try to avoid above all things the independent political mobilization of the workers against the capitalists; most of their activity is that of a left pressure group on the bourgeois government. Thus, one of the primary goals which the YWLL has set

itself is the construction of a classless United Youth Front, which will conduct "the fight for peace, equality, and economic security...an all-around fight for democracy" (Draft Resolution, YWLL Second National Conference, April 1972). This statement in itself amounts to a refusal to seek to lead the young workers and specially oppressed youth into the necessary fight against capitalist rule!

**Down With Workerist Youth Vanguardism!**

Youth as a group must be broken into its class components. As the RCY wrote in the documents of its 1971 Founding Conference:

"'Youth' in itself is neither revolutionary nor a class. The 'youth' consists of young workers, future petty-bourgeois technocrats and administrators, members of the ruling class, as well as radical intellectuals and future communists. Hitler, Trotsky, Mao and Nixon were all young once."

—*Youth, Class and Party*, p. 41

The student population, fixed upon by the New Left as the new vanguard, is heterogeneous, predominantly petty-bourgeois and has no guaranteed political direction. The American campuses in the 1950's were overwhelmingly politically quiescent; the German campuses in the 1930's were 90 percent fascist, 10 percent communist. However, youth vanguardism did not die with its specialized form, student vanguardism, but has mated with another manifestation of opportunism, workerism, to produce a doubly deformed offspring: workerist youth vanguardism. While the New Left completely repudiated the working class as hopelessly reactionary, workerism glorifies the present state of consciousness of the working class and capitulates to the slicker, left-talking bureaucrats like Arnold Miller of the United Mine Workers. Youth vanguardism added to workerism sees all youth as a specially oppressed group, necessarily allied to the working class, instead of recognizing the dominance of the class question above all. While it is frequently true that young workers are more militant than older workers (and black workers often more militant than whites), the job of revolutionaries is not to further divisions within the class but to strive for class homogeneity through their intervention into trade-union and other class struggles. Only the program of the SL/RCY, the Trotskyist transitional program, attempts to weld the struggle against special oppression to the political fight of the working class against capitalist dictatorship.

—A Shorter Work Week with No Loss in Pay ("30 for 40") to End Unemployment. Union Control of Hiring, End Discrimination in Hiring Practices. Equal Pay for Equal Work.

—Union Protection from First Day on Job. Full Union Benefits. No Second-Class Unionism.

—Organize the Unorganized. Labor Movement Must Take the Lead in Organizing the Unemployed.

—Training Programs Under Union Control at Full Union Wage, with Special Recruitment Efforts Aimed at Minorities and Women.

—End Child Labor in the Factory and on the Farm. Government Support to those Children Displaced.

—Full Adult Rights for Everyone 16 and Over. A Government Stipend to Enable Youth to Live away from Home.

—Workers Self-Defense Groups Based on the Trade Unions. United Class Defense of Oppressed Minorities and the Unemployed.

—Open Admissions to the Universities. Full Stipend for All Students. Nationalize the Universities Under Worker-Student-Faculty Control.

—Oust the Bureaucrats. Build a Workers Party Based on the Trade Unions, to Fight for a Workers Government.

—Nationalize Industry Under Workers Control.

—Build a World Trotskyist Youth Movement, Section of a Reconstructed Fourth International. ■

# Black Oppression and Proletarian Revolution



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Frederick Douglass was President of Colored National Labor Union when it liquidated into Republican Party in 1872.

## 1 / THE MATERIAL BASIS FOR BLACK OPPRESSION IN THE U.S.

[This is the first in a series of articles on the black question in the U.S.]

The division of the U.S. working class along race lines has been a major prop of the bourgeois order and a major obstacle to the forging of a unified proletarian vanguard. This division is rooted in the special oppression of blacks which is integral both to the development and to the death agony of modern capitalism. The special oppression of blacks in the U.S. takes the form of their complete *integration* into the political economy combined with their forced *segregation* at the bottom of that economy. Their complete integration into the U.S. political economy precludes a national solution to the oppression of blacks. At the same time, their forced segregation at the bottom of that economy means that black oppression cannot simply be reduced to a class question as was characteristic of even the best early American Socialists. The road to black emancipation necessarily passes through the destruction of U.S. capitalism by a victorious proletarian revolution. Every form of black separatism, substitutionist adventurism or social-democratic reformism is simply a criminal diversion from that road. At the same time unless the special oppression of blacks is understood and the struggle against that special oppression is made an integral part of the program for socialist revolution in the U.S., the American proletariat will not conquer.

As Marx states in *Capital* (Vol. I, Chap. 31) the initial or primitive accumulation of capital which laid the foundation for the development of capitalist production was acquired through brigandage, through the looting of the East Indies and the Americas and "the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black skins..." The development of capitalist production and the cotton industry in particular "gave in the United States a stimulus to the transformation of the earlier, more or less patriarchal slavery, into a system of commercial exploitation. In fact, the veiled slavery of the wage-

workers in Europe needed, for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the new world."

While chattel slavery and the plantation economy provided the raw materials for the industrial revolution in England, it proved a brake on industrial development in the U.S. From the standpoint of capitalist production, slavery had only one distinct advantage: it provided a steady supply of cheap labor. Indeed slave labor was "cheap" in the sense that, for example, the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture estimated in 1822 that the average cost to feed, clothe, house and otherwise maintain a slave was \$23.10 a year. But the initial cost of a chattel slave was high while "free" wage labor can be bought piecemeal. Further, slave labor driven by the lash has a lower level of productivity than "free" labor driven by necessity. And the slaveowner was less able to increase labor productivity through technological innovation than was the industrial capitalist because the hostility that the slave felt toward his bondage was often taken out on the farm implements with the consequence that farm implements were often of the crudest sort.

Further mechanization would require teaching slaves skills which the slavocracy as a whole thought politically dangerous and counterposed to its doctrine of "white supremacy" which held blacks to be less than human. As one slaveowner is reported to have said:

"The great fundamental principle should be that the slave should be kept as much as possible to agricultural labors. Those so employed are found to be the most orderly and obedient of slaves... There should be no black mechanics or artisans, at least in the cities."

—Eugene Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery*

Indeed, the leaders of slave revolts were often skilled craftsmen: Denmark Vesey was a builder and carpenter, Nat Turner was an experimenter in paper, gunpowder and pottery, and of the blacks involved in John Brown's Raid on Harpers Ferry, one was a printer, two were saddle and harness makers and

the last was a former student at Oberlin.

### Industrial vs. Slave Capital

Capitalist accumulation for the slavocracy could only take the form of the linear expansion of the plantation system into the West, while capitalist accumulation for the Northern bourgeoisie meant industrialization. The "irrepressible conflict" between these two counterposed systems of capitalist accumulation—industrial capital linked by railroads, based on independent farmers, requiring protective tariffs, "free" labor, the creation of a domestic market and concentration in the cities; and slave capital which required free trade, slave labor, the suppression of the domestic market and rural autarchy—finally culminated in the Civil War.

The division of the working class along race lines was shaped by the blacks' "middle passage" from chattel slavery to wage slavery and the attitude of organized labor to the developing black proletariat. Prior to the Civil War, there existed a large, black non-agricultural population. In 1850 the free black population, overwhelmingly urban, numbered 434,495; 45.5 percent of whom lived in the North, 54.2 percent in the South (C.H. Wesley, *Negro Labor in the United States*). Further, of the three million slaves in the South, 400,000 lived in cities and towns (*The Political Economy of Slavery*). It was the free black who played the leadership role in the slave rebellions, in the abolitionist movement and in the Underground Railroad. The first "back to Africa" movement was the "American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color in the United States" which was formed in the House of Representatives in 1816 and headed by Justice Busrod Washington, nephew of George Washington (who, in addition to being the nation's first president, was also at that time its largest slaveholder). It was hoped that by sending free blacks back to Africa the slave system would be *stabilized*.

In the North large-scale European immigration, especially from Ireland, tended to *displace* black laborers especially from the building crafts and from the docks.

**CAUTION!!**

**COLORED PEOPLE**

**OF BOSTON, ONE & ALL,**

You are hereby respectfully **CAUTIONED** and advised, to avoid conversing with the **Watchmen and Police Officers of Boston,**

For since the recent **ORDER OF THE MAYOR & ALDERMEN,** they are empowered to act as **KIDNAPPERS** AND **Slave Catchers,**

And they have already been actually employed in **KIDNAPPING, CATCHING, AND KEEPING SLAVES.** Therefore, if you value your **LIBERTY,** and the **Welfare of the Fugitives** among you, **Show them in every possible manner, as so many HOUND** on the track of the most unfortunate of your race.

**Keep a Sharp Look Out for KIDNAPPERS, and have TOP EYE open.**

APRIL 24, 1851.

Abolitionist poster in Boston, 1851.

This, combined with the use of blacks as strikebreakers, led to periodic race riots in such cities as Baltimore, New York and Philadelphia. However, after the defeat of the 1848 Revolution there was a large influx of revolutionary German workers who played a prominent role in the abolitionist movement. For example, many of these workers established German colonies throughout Texas. When the South captured the Republic of Texas as a slave state

they had intended to carve it up into smaller states in order to increase their representation within the Senate. They were forestalled by the presence of strong anti-slavery sentiment of the German communities which threatened to rip any smaller unit out of the grip of the slavocracy. The leading German abolitionist in Texas was the communist Adolphi Douai who published the *San Antonio Zeitung* from 1853 until he was driven out by slaveholders in 1856. During the Civil War the German communists carried on a propaganda campaign for the people to rise against the Confederacy. And General McCulloch writing to Jefferson Davis from San Antonio said that the propaganda "speaks the sentiment of a large portion of the population here..." (Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the U.S.*, Vol. 1).

White labor, both immigrant and native, in the North and the South, felt threatened by the prospect of the hordes of emancipated blacks competing for their jobs, a prospect continually held up before them by defenders of the slavocracy, including the Catholic Church, and a considerable section of the Northern bourgeoisie. Nonetheless workers saw that slavery depressed their wages and working conditions and that, as the Labor Reform League, an early American labor party effort, stated in an 1846 resolution: "American slavery must be uprooted before the elevation sought by the laboring classes can be effected" (*History of the Labor Movement in the U.S.*).

### Trade Unionism and the Abolitionist Movement

The abolitionist movement itself was split into pro- and anti-labor wings. Wendell Phillips opposed a boycott of products made by slave labor because "there was much labor in the world which, though perhaps a little better paid than that of slaves, was still unpaid and uncompensated in any just sense" (*History of the Labor Movement in the U.S.*, Vol. I). On the other hand, William Lloyd Garrison in the first issue of the *Liberator* claimed that "Trade unions were in the highest degree criminal" because they "inflamm the minds of our working classes against the more opulent." The presence of the "more opulent" in the leadership of the abolitionist movement gave rise to a poem at that time, "Death of a Factory Girl from Starvation," which appeared in a labor paper:

"That night a chariot passed her,  
While on the ground she lay,  
The daughter of her master,  
An evening visit pay,  
Their tender hearts are sighing  
As Negro woes are told  
While the white slave was dying  
Who gained their father's gold."

—*History of the Labor Movement in the U.S.*

Following the Civil War Marx wrote:

"In the United States of America any sort of independent labor movement was paralyzed so long as slavery disfigured a portion of the Republic. Labor with a white skin cannot emancipate itself where labor with a black skin is branded. But out of the death of slavery a new and vigorous life sprang. The first fruit of the Civil War was an agitation for the eight-hour day—a movement which ran with express speed from Atlantic to the Pacific, from New England to California."

—*Capital* (Vol. I, Chap. 10)

The eight-hour-day movement culminated in the National Labor Union (NLU) whose founding congress was held in August 1866. Immediately upon its inception the NLU was confronted with the two questions which have continued to confront the American labor movement to this day: admitting blacks to the existing unions and the need for an

*continued on page 5*